

# The Elementary ENGLISH REVIEW

VOL. VII

SEPTEMBER 1930

No. 7

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## The Drill Content of Certain Language Tests and Practice Exercises\*

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IT IS a principle which is well recognized by research workers in educational measurements that a scarcity of clean-cut aims and objectives in a subject-matter field places a definite limit on the development of adequate measuring instruments in that subject. This is readily shown by the fact that satisfactory and useful standardized tests have been developed in such definite fields as arithmetic and silent reading, while certain other fields such as the social sciences and literature, in which the aims are somewhat vague and indefinite, have not responded to measurement in a similar manner.

Language, although one of the earliest school subjects to be measured experimentally, still presents many almost insurmountable difficulties to the curriculum and test maker. Apparently there is no definite body of subject-matter such as is found in arithmetic. Possibly this can never be; perhaps *should never* be, since language, unlike arithmetic, is a volatile, live, and changing set of habits and skills which loses much of its power the moment it becomes stereotyped or crystallized. Yet there must be certain basic and unchanging

skills which need to be common to all users of it. There is disagreement even among authorities as to correct practices in such a definite and objective field of language as punctuation. Each curriculum maker, each text-book author, each drill-book author, and to a certain extent each test-maker in language appears to be a law unto himself. This conclusion is based upon the results of a number of carefully prepared analyses of such materials, two of which are combined to form the background of this article.

The two investigations which are summarized and compared are based upon the assumption that persons who are, or consider themselves to be, sufficient authorities in a subject-matter field to develop an objective standardized test or a set of drill exercises in it, presumably *should* know something about the subject-matter content of the chosen field. Accordingly, if test emphasis is any indication of instructional emphasis (and it certainly should be), an analysis of the test items, skills measured, drill content of the test or practice exercises should give a useful picture of the skills desired as a result of instruction, and

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\*A paper presented at the Atlantic City meeting of the American Educational Research Association on February 22, 1930.

should afford one basis for a direct attack on the critical items to be included in the curriculum. With this general idea in mind an analysis of the content of fifteen of the better and more carefully validated and standardized elementary language tests and eighteen language drill booklets was made.<sup>1</sup>

The general plans of these two investigations will now be outlined briefly. With the following criteria in mind the fifteen standardized language tests were selected:

1. The test must be standardized
2. The test must be suitable for use in at least one of the grades from 3 to 8
3. The test must measure more than one language ability
4. The test must be highly objective
5. The test must have been published since 1919

One form of each of the specific language tests was included in this study. Among the tests used were the *Los Angeles Diagnostic Language Test*, *Charters Diagnostic Language Test*, *Pressey Diagnostic Tests in English Composition*, *Franseen Diagnostic Tests in Language*, *Iowa Elementary Language Tests*, *Kirby Grammar Tests*, the *New Stanford Achievement Test*, *Public School Achievement Tests*, and the *Wilson Language Error Test*.

Each of these fifteen language tests was subjected to a detailed analysis of the skills and specific language functions measured by it. In addition to this, tabulations were made showing the frequencies of occurrence of various word forms used in the items. Tables showing the frequencies for each particular language situation were also prepared. Due to the difficulty

of condensing this material, very little of it can be presented here.

A similar procedure was followed in the case of the analysis of the language drill exercises. Eighteen exercise and drill books were analyzed as to the specific skills on which drill is provided and also as to the specific words and word forms used in the drill exercises. Frequency tables were made showing these items both by the number of drill books in which they occur and by the total frequency in all of the drills for each item.

One of the major considerations of this article is the determination of the overlap in the test items and drill items found in the two studies. It has been generally accepted as a criterion for any practical supervisory program based on the use of tests and drill materials that there should be a rather high degree of similarity between the skills tested and those on which corrective practice is provided. That is to say, one would expect that drills designed to develop language usage habits shown to be inadequate by an analytical test, should provide opportunity for practice on usage exercises quite similar in type and content. It is therefore the purpose of this paper to present here a few of the results of these two types of analysis which seem to have some relationship. The data upon which the major portion of the remaining discussion is based are presented in the accompanying tables.

A rather significant comparison of the overlapping of the drill content of tests and drill exercises is presented in Tables I and II. The first table shows the summary and classification of the word forms found in the language tests. These are grouped by form of word as well as by frequency of appearance. For example, the analysis of the tests revealed the use of a total of 164 verb forms, 65 of which were used only once, 29 of which were used twice, 13 of which were used three times, etc. A little examination of this table indicates quite clearly that there is

<sup>1</sup>Credit for the detailed work on these investigations should go to two graduate students working under the direction of the writer:

Bunch, J. P. *An Analysis of Certain Standardized Language Tests*, Master's Thesis, University of Iowa, 1929.

Crawford, J. R. *The Analysis of the Drill Content of Certain Practice Exercises in Language*, Master's Thesis, University of Iowa, 1929.

very little agreement among the makers of these language tests as to the specific verb forms or any other word forms (or even skill) on which test items are prepared. When it is recognized that a total of 204 different word forms (55.4%) out of a grand total of 368 are tested only once, this conclusion seems obvious.

It will be noted that percentages are reported at the bottom of Table I. These percentages give rise also to this same conclusion. It is found for example, that 39.6% out of 100 verbs used in any of the test exercises occurred but once; 70.7% of the words occurred less than three times, and 94.4% of the words occurred less than ten times. It is realized, of course, that a tabulation by word forms is not a perfectly valid index to any type of test item which is used in the test. However, these items were analyzed very carefully as to the skills involved, and it appears that the present classification is at least reliable enough to give some indication of the gen-

eral tendency on the part of makers of language tests.

The language drill exercises when tabulated on a similar basis reveal frequencies quite similar to those given for the language tests. (See Table II). A larger number of individual words was found. Two hundred fifty-nine verb forms out of a total of 610 different word forms were used for drill purposes. Of these 259 verbs, 79 or 30.5%, were used only once, 20 more were used twice, etc. Frequencies for each of the various grammatical classifications of word forms are consistently greater in the analysis of drill than in the test analysis. This results naturally in the reduction of the proportional frequency of occurrence. For example, in the drill exercises 36.7% of all of the drill words were used once, 48.5% were used less than three times, with 63% of the words being used less than ten times. These two tables (Tables I and II) should be compared much more extensively if all of the sig-

TABLE I

SUMMARY AND CLASSIFICATION OF TEST DRILL FREQUENCIES

	Verbs	Adj.	Adv.	Pronouns	Nouns	Prep.	Conj.	Totals
Above 25 .....	1			1				2
25 .....								
24 .....		1		2				3
23 .....								
22 .....								
21 .....				1				1
20 .....								
19 .....								
18 .....				1				1
17 .....								
16 .....				1				1
15 .....	4			1				5
14 .....	2							2
13 .....	2			1				3
12 .....								
11 .....	2	1	1	1				5
10 .....	3		1	2				6
9 .....	4							4
8 .....	5	1	2					8
7 .....	5			1				6
6 .....	4		1			1		6
5 .....	10	1		1			1	13
4 .....	15	4		2		3		24
3 .....	13		3	1	1		2	20
2 .....	29	10	8	4	1	3	1	56
1 .....	65	55	29	4	40	4	5	204
Total .....	164	73	45	24	42	11	9	368
Per cent used once.....	39.63	75.3	95.6	54.2	95.2	36.3	55.3	55.4
Per cent used less than 3.....	57.3	89.0	82.2	33.3	97.6	63.6	66.7	70.7
Per cent used less than 10.....	91.5	97.3	64.4	16.7	100.0	100.0	100.0	94.3

nificant items of relationship are to be brought out.

The summaries of the preceding tables are brought into definite comparison in

nificant conclusion may be drawn from this table. There is a very definite and obvious similarity in the drill emphasis given to the various grammatical forms of

TABLE II  
SUMMARY AND CLASSIFICATION OF LANGUAGE DRILL FREQUENCIES

	Verbs	Adj.	Adv.	Pro- nouns	Contr.	Nouns	Prep.	Conj.	Idiom Expr.	Total
Above 25 .....	50	8	5	12	5		5	1		86
25 .....	2							1		3
24 .....										
23 .....	4									4
22 .....	2	1	1		1					5
21 .....			1							1
20 .....			1							1
19 .....		2	1		1					4
18 .....	1		1							2
17 .....	2		2							4
16 .....	6				1	1		1		9
15 .....	3	1			2					6
14 .....	2			1						3
13 .....	4									4
12 .....	5	1	1							7
11 .....	1		2		1					4
10 .....	7		2		1				1	11
9 .....	3			1	1					5
8 .....	7	1	4	1	1			1		15
7 .....	7	1	3	1				1	1	14
6 .....	11	7			2					20
5 .....	14	2	2	1	1	1		1	1	23
4 .....	17	8	6	1	1		2		2	37
3 .....	12	10	3	4	11	2			4	46
2 .....	20	19	17	4	2	6	1	2	1	72
1 .....	79	63	22	4	1	48	2	2	3	224
Total .....	259	124	74	30	32	58	10	10	13	610
Per cent used once.....	30.5	50.8	29.7	13.3	3.1	82.8	20.0	20.0	23.1	36.7
Per cent used less than 3 .....	38.2	66.1	52.7	26.7	9.4	93.1	30.0	40.0	30.7	48.5
Per cent used less than 10 .....	65.6	89.5	77.0	56.7	62.5	98.3	100.0	70.0	92.3	63.0

Table III. This tabulation shows the number of words coming under each of the different grammatical classifications found in the language tests and drills. One sig-

words. For example, the language tests emphasize verbs approximately 44.5% of the grand total of drill afforded, while the language drills give 42.5% of the total drill

TABLE III  
SUMMARY OF CLASSIFICATION BY PERCENTAGES OF TOTAL NUMBER OF WORDS USED

Classification	Number of Words		Percent of Total	
	Language Tests	Language Drills	Language Tests	Language Drills
Verbs .....	164	259	44.5	42.5
Modifiers .....				
Adverbs .....	45	74	12.3	12.1
Adjectives .....	73	124	19.8	20.3
Contractions .....		32		5.3
Pronouns .....	24	30	6.5	4.9
Prepositions .....	11	10	3.0	1.6
Idiomatic Expr. ....		13		2.2
Conjunctions .....	9	10	2.4	1.6
Nouns .....	42	58	11.5	9.5
Totals .....	368	610	100.0	100.0



to verbs. Modifiers (adjectives and adverbs with approximately 20% and 12% respectively) represent the next largest group followed by nouns with 9.5% and 11.5%.<sup>2</sup>

The actual overlapping of the content of the test and drill items is shown by the

over, 54 verbs were found in the practice exercises only. These words were those forms which occurred with a frequency of three or more in the drill list. Each of the various grammatical forms and words is treated in a similar manner. According to the data summarized here we find that

TABLE IV  
OVERLAPPING OF LANGUAGE TEST AND DRILL WORDS

Form of Word	3 or more	2	Words Common to Both Test and Drill Lists Frequencies 1	Words in Test List Only	Total Number Words in Test	Words in Drill (3 or More Frequency List Only)
Verbs .....	118	6	5	35	164	54
Adjectives .....	20	9	8	36	73	20
Adverbs .....	14	7	4	20	45	17
Pronouns .....	20	0	1	3	24	3
Nouns .....	0	0	0	42	42	3
Prepositions .....	8	0	1	2	11	3
Conjunctions .....	6	1	1	1	9	1
Total .....	186	23	20	139	368	101

data in Table IV. This table presents a classification of the drill by form of word and roughly by frequencies. There were 118 verb forms which were common to both lists, and each at the same time had a frequency of appearance in the drill items

139 of the 368 words (37.6%) used in the test list are found in the test list only and do not occur at all in the practice exercise list. In a similar way 101 of the drill words with frequencies of three or more in the drill list occur only in the drill list.

TABLE V  
CLASSIFICATION OF WORDS FOUND IN TEST LIST ONLY\*

	Total	Test Frequency						Horn List (Grouping by Thousand)						Not Listed
		10	5-9	4	3	2	1	7	2	3	4	5	Blank*	
Verbs .....	35		1		1	7	26	9	6	3	3	3	9	2
Adjectives .....	36					1	35	7	4	5	2	0	2	16
Adverbs .....	20	1			1	3	15	6	3	1	1	0	6	3
Pronouns .....	3			1		1	1	2					1	
Nouns .....	42				1	1	40	3	2	3	2	1	11	20
Prepositions ...	2					2		2						
Conjunctions ...	1					1		1						
Total .....	139	1	1	1	3	16	117	30	15	12	8	4	29	41

\*Listed but no classification given.

of three or more. Six verb forms occurred in the drill exercises only twice, five verb forms only once, etc. Thirty-five verb forms were found in the test list only, making a grand total of 164 verb forms. More-

This situation demands some further attention. Obviously, these words which are found in the test lists only must be subjected to some type of analysis to determine their relative importance. Why were they included in the test list in the first place, and why are they not given any significant drill in the practice exercises? Some additional evidence on this point is given in Table V. This tabulation shows for each of the forms

<sup>2</sup>This is somewhat in contrast with the Stormzand and O'Shea data in which nouns are reported as representing the part of speech of highest relative frequency (24.2%) followed closely by adjectives (20.9%) and verbs (20.1%). Evidently the test and practice exercises are colored by results from error studies rather than by strict social usage. As a matter of fact Crawford's study of the practice exercises shows this to be quite definitely the case.

of the words the frequency with which each form appeared in the test list. It will be noted that 26 of the 35 verb forms occurred only once in the test list; seven of the 35 occurred two times, one three times, etc. This is found in the left-hand section of Table V. In a similar way 117 of the total 139 words in the test list only appeared in the test lists once; 16 of these words appeared twice, etc. Now this relatively infrequent appearance of these words in test situations might lead to the unwarranted conclusion that these items themselves are of slight importance. On this point attention is called to the right-hand section of Table V in which these various words are grouped according to social importance. The 35 verb forms are classified by the particular thousand in which they are found in the HORN BASIC WRITING VOCABULARY<sup>3</sup> list. Nine of these verb forms occurred in the first thousand of the Horn list, six in the second thousand, three in the third thousand, etc. Nine of these verbs were listed in the vocabulary but no frequencies were given; two of these words were not listed at all. When the

in the Horn list. Furthermore, 41 (29.5%) of these words *are not listed in the vocabulary at all*. Obviously there is need for greater care on the part of makers of language tests in the selection of word forms for use in connection with the testing of certain language situations. There seems to be little reason, from a social utility point of view, for the inclusion of at least 70 of the 139 words found only in the language tests. This, of course, assumes that the HORN BASIC WRITING VOCABULARY list of ten thousand words is a valid criterion for this purpose. It is extremely doubtful if any such list is entirely valid for this purpose. However, in the absence of a better criterion this one is accepted.

A similar type of analysis is presented in Table VI for the 101 words found only in the drill exercises. Generally speaking the situation in the drill exercises is not quite so serious as it appears to be in the case of the test list. Twenty-six of the 101 drill words are found in three sets of drills, 21 in 4, 30 in 5 to 9 of the drills, 10 in 10 to 14, etc. In a similar way 45 of these 101 words which are found in the drill lists are

TABLE VI  
CLASSIFICATION OF WORDS FOUND IN DRILL LIST ONLY

		Drill Frequency									Horn List (Grouping by Thousand)										
	Total	30	25	20	15	10	5-9	4	3		1	2	3	4	5	Blank*	Not Listed				
Verbs .....	54	2	1	2	1	7	20	10	11		20	10	4	3	2	8	7				
Adjectives...	20	1			2		5	5	7		9	4			2	1	4				
Adverbs .....	17			1	3	3	3	4	3		10	3		1		1	2				
Pronouns ...	3								3			3									
Nouns .....	3						1		2		2	1									
Prepositions.	3		1					2			3										
Conjunctions.	1						1				1										
Total .....	101	3	2	3	6	10	30	21	26		45	21	4	4	4	10	13				

\*Listed but no classification given.

total situation is viewed it is found that 30 (or about 21.6%) of the 139 words found in the test list only are found within the first thousand of the Horn word list; 15 more are found in the second thousand. On the other hand 29 (20.8%) of these words are so infrequently used socially that they are not given frequency classification

found also within the first thousand words in the HORN BASIC WRITING VOCABULARY; twenty-one more are also found in the second thousand. Ten of these words in the drill list are listed but not classified in the Horn list, and only 13 of the words are not listed at all.

This rather interesting situation prompted a check on the actual words involved. This resulted in a list of drill words found in

<sup>3</sup>HORN, ERNEST. A BASIC WRITING VOCABULARY. University of Iowa. Monograph in Education, First Series No. 4, April 1, 1926.

the test list but not found at all in the language drills, and which are at the same time found in the first thousand of HORN'S BASIC WRITING VOCABULARY. Such verbs as *think, get, told, heard, hope*, etc., are involved. Adjectives such as *nice, awful, great, careful, little*; adverbs such as *very, only, just, last*, are given in the test lists, but, as far as the analysis revealed, were not used at all in the eighteen language drills analyzed. In a similar way drill words with a frequency of three or more found in the language drills but not used at all in the test lists are given. This list includes such verbs as *went, take, try, be, says, make*; such adjectives as *any, these, better, best, mine*; such adverbs as *off, more, ever, so, not, when*, etc.

To summarize briefly, it may be said that the data presented thus far indicate a fairly close agreement as to the relative drill emphasis given to the various parts of speech in both the test and practice materials. However, it should be pointed out that *this similar proportionate emphasis does not mean at all that the same skills or the same items are receiving the emphasis*. The fact that many of the word forms used in both types of material appear only once, and that the total overlap of these word forms in the two types of material is not large, is sufficient evidence on this point. Over one-half of the word forms used for testing purposes appear only once. More than one-third of the word forms used for drill purposes appear only once. Probably this may not be considered serious in the case of the tests, but in the case of the drill exercises it is serious. It can scarcely be expected that one or two, or even three practices on a difficult word form or skill is adequate to fix it. Moreover, it should be remembered that these figures are not merely the learning opportunity afforded in any one practice set but represent the composite of eighteen such drill booklets.

Of the total number of word forms used in the tests, (368), only slightly over 50%

are found also in the drill exercises with as many as three appearances each while more than 38% of the forms appear only in the test list. One hundred and one of the 610 words forms in the drills are found only in the drill list. The total number of word forms with a frequency of one or more which are common to both lists is 229. (See Table IV:  $186 + 23 + 20 = 229$ .) Possibly in these overlapping items lies some hope for the person interested in developing a correlated testing and corrective program in language usage.

Many of the word forms used in the tests only or in the drill exercises only (see Tables V and VI) represent words of sufficient social importance (as defined in this discussion) to warrant more attention. Almost one-third of the word forms found only in the tests are to be found within the first two thousand words in the HORN BASIC WRITING VOCABULARY. In the case of the words found only in the drill exercises this is true of almost exactly two-thirds of the words.

The following words are the only ones used in nine or more of the fifteen tests:

Verbs: *were, are, may, have, lay, doesn't, saw, came*

Pronouns: *he, I, who, whom, me, his*

Adverbs: *well*

In the conclusion of his analysis of the drill content of these fifteen language tests Bunch makes the following statement, which undoubtedly is significant: "One of the outstanding facts revealed by this study is the limited agreement among the makers of these tests in regard to what language skills, words, and phrases should be tested and upon which the emphasis should be placed. *No word, phrase, or language situation was found, the use of which was tested in each of the fifteen tests.*" In a similar way Crawford points out that *only forty-five words were utilized for drill purposes in as many as nine of the eighteen drill booklets analyzed.*

In conclusion, the results of these checks

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# Business Letters

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FOLLOWING a study of friendly letters,<sup>1</sup> there often comes a need for business forms in the upper grades. Sometimes when notes, invitations, and letters to friends are being written in school, there is a lack of interest among the boys. But when business correspondence begins to be discussed, the boys have their innings. Part of the motivation for the unit described here was derived from a newspaper clipping that was read to the class. The other came spontaneously when a real need for letter-writing arose. The clipping follows:

## *BUSINESS MEN IMPROVE WRITING*

Lincoln, Nebraska, February 19. (By United Press.) Business men are writing better letters than they used to, according to Professor Maurice Weseen of the University of Nebraska. He based his statement on a study of the letter files of several business firms.

"The potential power of the business letter is being recognized," said the professor. "I find that leading business institutions throughout the country are making systematic efforts to eliminate 'dead' letters and make their business letters as attractive and full of power as their advertising."<sup>2</sup>

"What is a 'dead letter?'" was the question asked the class.

Some thought at first it was the kind with an incorrect address, but presently one

pupil suggested that in this case it was a letter "that didn't do any good."

They were ready to give the characteristics that make a letter "do good." The results on the board were:

1. A business letter must have a purpose.
2. It must be forceful.
3. It must be brief.
4. It must be clear.
5. It must be well-expressed.
6. It must be neat.

During the time the above points were being listed, someone suggested that a business letter differed in several respects from a friendly one. So after the six essentials had been made, the class gave likenesses and differences of the two kinds of letters. The differences they discovered were expression, purpose, and form, but they thought neatness, careful expression, clearness, courtesy, and personal style were necessary in both.

The assignment for the next day was to ask their fathers to tell them instances when it paid to write a good letter. On their return, they had some humorous and some serious cases to report. One father said he got his first position by answering an advertisement and, at the request of the man who received his application, he went for a conference and was accepted. Another told of an important order he secured once by a particularly well-expressed letter. If they had not thought so before, by the time ten or twelve examples had been given, most pupils decided ability to write a business letter was a distinct asset.

<sup>1</sup>See Miss Walsh's article, "A Unit of Study in Letter Writing," *Elementary English Review*, May, 1929, for an account of a study of friendly letters.

<sup>2</sup>From *The Nashville Tennessean*, February 19, 1926, and reprinted by courtesy of The United Press.



Granted that generally there are not nearly as many occasions in school for business letters as there are for friendly ones, it is still true that teachers frequently do not make use of those occasions that do present themselves. At this particular time, a savings account of nearly eighty dollars, made by summer school classes on their school paper, had been given to this sixth grade for books. A committee of children had been chosen to select, from lists compiled by all pupils in the room, those books which were to be purchased. It therefore seemed an ideal situation to have actual orders written by the children. When the teacher made this suggestion, the children were eager to write the letters.

Before class, copies of business letters had been put on display around the room in the same way that friendly ones had been exhibited.<sup>3</sup> Since they had a real motive for writing a letter then, pupils were given an opportunity to inspect the models around the room. When they went back to their seats, there was informal discussion about differences in form between these business letters and the friendly letters that the class had already studied and written. Some of the differences were:

1. An extra heading for the person to whom the letter was to be sent.
2. Length of paragraphs shorter.
3. Salutation and complimentary close formal.
4. Punctuation after the salutation, colon or semicolon, instead of a comma.

From their observations they also noticed that "Gentlemen" seemed to have slight preference among the better companies over "Dear Sirs"; that "Yours very truly," "Sincerely yours," and "Very truly yours" seemed to be favored for a complimentary close; that "My dear Mrs. Saunders" showed more formality than "Dear Mrs.

Saunders"; and that it seemed correct to sign the given and family name with *Miss* or *Mrs.* in parenthesis before it.<sup>4</sup>

Four by six-inch cards were passed at the end of the lesson; pupils were asked to write the correct form on these cards, omitting the body of the letter.<sup>5</sup> Although the form was more complicated than that of a friendly letter, there were a number of perfect results, due to the fact that the class had already studied friendly letters.

Some of the books selected by the committee had been ordered from local book dealers, but there were titles left so that almost every child not on the committee could place an order with some firm. With several of the weakest children, two wrote to the same firm and the better letter was sent.<sup>6</sup> There was a struggle with two or three of these weak pupils before letters acceptable to the class were finished. But finally all orders were ready for the post. They took their letters and money to the postoffice and made money orders for the amounts of the books.<sup>7</sup>

A typical letter is given below:

Peabody Demonstration School  
Nashville, Tennessee  
November 15, 1927

Little Brown and Company  
Boston, Massachusetts  
Gentlemen:

Please send me one (1) copy of Masefield's MARTIN HYDE. A money order for two dollars (\$2.00) is enclosed in payment.

Very truly yours,  
Burdette Taylor

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<sup>3</sup>Letters mounted on gray construction paper, 8½"×11", were hung on wire with artist's hooks. The hooks are \$1.00 a hundred (Dennison), and are available at any stationer's or school supply house.

<sup>4</sup>It is amazing how many teachers fail to use these forms.

<sup>5</sup>This was explained in the article in friendly letters Vol. VI, No. 5, page 131.

<sup>6</sup>It was against good teaching technique to have any letters not actually sent, but it seemed unavoidable. Later without exception these pupils wrote other letters that were mailed.

<sup>7</sup>Checks would have been more economical, but then only the treasurer would have had opportunity to learn their use.

# Teaching Language Fundamentals\*

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THE LACK of clear and definite limitation of the work to be covered in language teaching in the elementary school has been responsible for much waste. The requirements have been too many and too vague. Pupils who leave the elementary school before completing the course would be better off if they had been taught a small number of things thoroughly and if they had been given abundant practice in these fundamentals.

Data from surveys made by a number of educators show that the pupils of the elementary schools have not mastered language habits. When these surveys are examined carefully certain errors are found to be very numerous. For the sixth, the seventh, and the eighth grades such errors as these are discovered to be made repeatedly: capitalization of common nouns, confusion of adjectives and adverbs, failure to begin sentences with capital letters, failure to place periods at the end of sentences, failure to use quotation marks and the apostrophe. It is not only that these errors are persistent in the elementary grades but also that they carry over in the high school.

The kind and the amount of language training in the elementary school should be determined, first, by the common language needs of people in every day life, second, by the specific language habits the school can cultivate which will most usefully meet the needs of the pupils at the end of their elementary course, and third, by the amount pupils can with reasonable effort acquire in the different grades.

Topics which should be emphasized in the English grammar course can be determined

easily on the basis of usage and error. Thorough investigations, which have included a study of the written work of pupils in the higher grades, and the written work of adults, show that the following grammatical topics should be stressed: sentence structure, clauses, phrases, and the parts of speech.<sup>1</sup>

Current usage as regards capitalization shows that about four-tenths of all capitals are at the beginning of a sentence; next in frequency comes capitalization of place names and names of persons.<sup>2</sup>

An investigation which consisted of an accounting of all the punctuation found in a certain number of business letters, and professional letters and one number of three different magazines and newspapers showed that 87 per cent or about seven-eighths of all the marks used were either periods or commas. These two marks were used with equal frequency.

From this survey it would seem that to teach pupils of the elementary grades the various uses of the period and the comma (including the apostrophe) is of greatest importance.<sup>3</sup>

Now that we know from usage what the language needs of people are, let us see what pupils' abilities are. The first important study of grammatical errors was made by Dr. W. W. Charters. His investigation was made for the purpose of

<sup>1</sup>HOW MUCH ENGLISH GRAMMAR? By M. J. Stormzand and M. V. O'Shea. Pages 12-15.

<sup>2</sup>"A Statistical Study of Usage and of Children's Errors in Capitalization." By S. L. Pressey, *English Journal*. Pages 727-732.

<sup>3</sup>"A Statistical Study of Current Usage in Punctuation." By H. Ruhlen and S. L. Pressey, *English Journal*. Pages 325-331.

\*This paper was prepared under the direction of Mr. C. C. Certain in a course given at Detroit Teachers College.

discovering what errors in the use of oral and written language forms were made by the children of Kansas City elementary schools.

The results of this investigation were as follows: the largest single item was the confusion of the past tense and the past participle. Failure of the verb to agree with its subject in person and number, confusion of adjective and adverb, confusion of dependent and independent clauses, failure to capitalize proper nouns and adjectives were other common mistakes.

In punctuation these errors were outstanding: period at the end of the sentence, members of a series not separated, and use of the apostrophe.<sup>4</sup>

Interesting data were also obtained from a survey of the Gary schools. Some of the most important errors made by the pupils in an eighth grade were as follows: the use of one word for another, confusion of dependent and independent clauses, use of the wrong tense of the verb, failure to place a period at the end of a sentence, incorrect use of quotation marks, failure to capitalize proper nouns, capitalization of common nouns, and failure to begin sentences with capital letters.<sup>5</sup>

Common errors in capitalization as described in an article by S. L. Pressey<sup>6</sup> are found most frequently to be failure to capitalize at the beginning of sentences and capitalization of words, phrases or clauses, as if sentences. These mistakes are perhaps due to lack of sentence sense rather than to a lack of familiarity with rules for capitalization. Next in importance is capitalization of common nouns. Of less importance and fewer in number are errors in place names and failure to capitalize "East" and "West" when used to designate parts of the country.

Thomas H. Briggs has set down five formal details of composition which should be mastered by all pupils before finishing the elementary grades. One object of his test was to measure pupils' abilities to use details correctly.<sup>7</sup> The elements selected for the test were: initial capital, terminal period and interrogation, capital for proper noun, detection and correction of run-on sentences, apostrophe of possession and comma before *but*. Results from the test showed that errors were numerous for each element in the grades and in the high school.

From these findings it is evident that few forms in grammar, capitalization, and punctuation have become automatic in the minds of the pupils at the end of the elementary school. This is probably due to the fact that too many things have been taught that should have been left for the high school, since they do not appeal to the need or the capacity of the ordinary elementary school pupil.

In all cases failure to begin sentences with capitals, failure to capitalize proper nouns and adjectives, the misuse of quotation marks and the apostrophe, and the omission of periods at the end of sentences are the most frequent errors. Due to the frequency of the occurrence of these forms, and the frequency of their misuse or omission, they should be mastered by the elementary pupils. If they were emphasized in the seventh and eighth grades they would be remembered.

The following course of study in grammar is based on information obtained from the study of a number of surveys on language needs and errors.

#### SUGGESTED COURSE OF STUDY IN GRAMMAR

##### Grade 7 B

##### A. New work

1. Recognition of declarative, interrogative, imperative, and exclamatory sentences

<sup>4</sup>HOW MUCH ENGLISH GRAMMAR? By Stormzand and O'Shea. Pages 168-189.

<sup>5</sup>THE GARY SURVEY. By S. A. Curtis. Pages 216-262.

<sup>6</sup>"A Statistical Study of Usage and of Children's Errors in Capitalization." By S. L. Pressey, *English Journal*. Pages 727-732.

<sup>7</sup>"An English Form Test." By Thomas H. Briggs. *Teachers College Record*, 1921. Pages 1-11.

2. Simple and complete subject and predicate of simple sentences. Sentences used in this grade should be simple and contain no difficulties in thought
3. Parts of speech  
Nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs
4. Capitalization at beginning of sentences
5. Capitalization of proper nouns
6. Correct punctuation at end of sentences
7. Punctuation of direct quotations
8. Possessive singular of nouns

#### B. Teaching helps

1. Exercises for sentence recognition, such as dividing unpunctuated paragraphs into sentences, and combining ideas into sentences
2. Games for reviewing nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs and the arrangement of sentences

#### Grade 7 A

##### A. Review work

1. Recognition of four kinds of sentences
2. Subject and predicate of simple sentences
3. Capitalization and punctuation at beginning and end of sentences
4. Possessive singular of nouns

##### B. New work

1. Compound sentences
2. Conjunctions—*and, but, or*
3. Capitalization and punctuation of nouns used in series, appositive expressions, divided quotations, proper adjectives, contractions, and possessive plurals

##### C. Teaching helps

1. Both the reviews and new work may be presented with the aid of exercises and games, similar to those suggested for grade 7 B

#### Grade 8 B

##### A. Review work

1. Simple and compound sentences  
Before the work for this grade is

taken up, there should be complete mastery of the structure of simple and compound sentences

2. Capitalization and punctuation at beginning and end of sentences
3. Capitalization of proper nouns and proper adjectives
4. Divided quotations
5. Possessive singular and plural of nouns

##### B. New work

1. Complex sentence  
Sentences studied should be very simple in form. Principal and subordinate clauses should be taught through composition work
2. Prepositions
3. Prepositional phrases

##### C. Teaching helps

1. Exercises
  - a. Connecting sentences with a relative pronoun
  - b. Changing adjectives to adjective phrases
  - c. Changing adverbs to adverbial phrases
  - d. Changing adjective and adverbial phrases to clauses

#### Grade 8 A

##### A. Review work

1. Proper adjectives
2. Divided quotations
3. Possessives

##### B. New work

1. Complex sentences  
A continuation of the work of grade 8 B, using more difficult sentences
2. Direct object
3. Relative and interrogative pronouns
4. Conjunctive adverbs
5. Subordinating conjunctions
6. Personal pronouns, emphasizing case
7. Use of comma in compound sentences
8. Use of comma in complex sentences when the adverbial clause precedes the main clause



# Some Thoughts on Boys' Reading\*

JULIA F. CARTER

*Supervisor of Work with Children, Public Library, Cincinnati, Ohio*

TO ANYONE working with children, it is a recognized fact that the foundations are of utmost importance. This is true not only in regard to their physical and scholastic lives but also in the forming of their literary taste. The earlier one begins to guide and influence a child's reading along the right lines, the firmer is the basis upon which his whole literary life is built. Reading reaches the roots of growth, and bad reading may weaken or hamper the healthy development of character. On the other hand, there are many evidences showing the effect of fine reading upon men and women known throughout the world for their character and achievement. Often in the autobiographies of these men and women they mention the fact that the books they read as children very materially affected their lives, either in influencing their characters or in guiding them in the choice of their life careers. More than ever people coming in contact with children should feel their responsibilities concerning books.

Throughout the country great thought is being expended for the betterment of all conditions affecting children, and reading is no exception. From the child's earliest years attention is paid to the books given him. First, for good picture books, fine technique, and color in drawing, as well as good stories are required. Then follow the best of folk lore and fairy tales. If children are to discover anything in life, they must have imagination, and to keep from them fairy tales and romantic legend is to dwarf them spiritually and narrow their

horizons. Only people with imagination perform great feats. Equipped with imagination, they are able to dream dreams and see visions. Without the inspiration of these dream-inspired deeds the world would become drab and dreary to the commonplace human beings.

The next step that naturally follows is fiction which should be well written and uphold good standards. However, it is not long before the average boy is dissatisfied with a diet of fiction alone, and desires biography, travel and history, as well as books on machinery and science. Having observed these selections by boys for several years, it was with surprise that I read an article on boys' reading which contradicted almost all my observations and theories. In the *Publisher's Weekly* for December 21, 1929, there appeared "A Novel Booklist for Boys." This list was compiled by Mr. Jack Robbins, of Chicago, and the books listed are considered by him essential for a competent background for life in all its phases. They are not ones which the majority of people would offer to growing boys for a normal background, but a more astonishing statement is made regarding the choice of only fiction titles. Mr. Robbins and his co-workers, among them Sinclair Lewis, Daniel Hickey and several university professors, examined and discussed over five hundred works of fiction, since they were of the opinion, "that only fiction can carry a message to the juvenile mind."

In my opinion, this statement would indicate that Mr. Robbins and his co-workers

\*This article is the eighth in a series published under the direction of Miss Elizabeth D. Briggs, Acting Chairman of the Book Evaluation Committee of the Section of Library Work with Children of the American Library Association.

either do not know boys, or, they underestimate their abilities. In the children's room of a public library the librarian behind the desk may not know a boy as well as the leader of the boys' club, but she is in a position to know much better what that boy is voluntarily selecting for his reading. The librarians try not to influence the choice of the children too much, but do consider carefully the books bought for their reading. They get for the shelves as varied a choice of books as possible and then allow the boys and girls to browse among them and choose for themselves, giving guidance or suggestions when asked. The boys and girls are usually served by the children's rooms until they reach the senior high school. For this adolescent age various means are used to make the available books especially attractive. In some libraries these shelves of books are in the children's rooms; in others, in the adult department. In such large new libraries as Los Angeles and Cleveland, whole rooms are for the exclusive use of these boys and girls. The lists of books purchased for these shelves and rooms show very different titles than those listed by Mr. Robbins and seem to disprove the statement that boys read only fiction and that that is the one type of writing which influences them.

Fiction is the most easily read because of the connected story, but any topic may be made to appeal to any reader if it is interestingly presented. Authors and publishers are recognizing this fact and are thereby opening many new avenues of literary interest for children. A glance over the publisher's catalogues will show the large number of new titles of biography and travel as well as science and invention, which have been added to the boys' possible reading. Also many of the old books have been republished in more attractive editions, and today you will find many boys reading the translations of the Greek and Latin classics. Any boy interested in a special subject will read as many books as possible on that subject, whether written

for juveniles or adults. This has been proved over and over again in the children's rooms of the public libraries throughout the country. As a concrete example of this, during the past year this library system has circulated to the boys and girls of the county 1,012,339 books; of this number 527,145 were non-fiction and 485,194 were fiction. Of the non-fiction 105,489 were books of travel, biography and history.

A short time ago there was held in this city a boys' hobby show. To those of us who saw the exhibit, the diversity of subjects represented and the care with which exhibits were made was a great surprise. To name but a few—there were stamp collections, mineral collections, arrow heads, model boats and aeroplanes, handicraft in iron and also in silver, mounted butterflies and birds, and woodcarving, as well as the inexhaustible cigar bands and match boxes of all descriptions. These boys showed conclusively that they were interested in something besides fiction. If we had had an opportunity at this show to ask an exhibitor about his collection we undoubtedly would have discovered that the boy had studied the subject thoroughly and was prepared to answer our questions intelligently. To use a single instance of this, a boy who was rather poor in his school work became interested in etchings and read several books on the subject, not written for the juvenile reader. Moreover, he spent hours at the art museum studying the different kinds of etchings, until he could discuss them in detail. Who is it that is busy making model aeroplanes and ships? The boys, and they do not do it because somebody compels them to, but because they are keenly interested in aeroplanes and ships.

The list of novels in question has on it books which would make a boy introspective and self and sex conscious. In one of his letters, Captain Robert Falcon Scott writes: "Don't grow to think a play can't live without a sex problem. The mind of a

man grows heartily sick of too great a stress on this subject. Men with infinitely varied and specialized activities must demand robust idols." Another fault with the list is that it contains no humor. But the worst fault, to my thinking, is that it lists no books of heroes. Every boy is a hero worshipper, and it is that idealism in him which gives us great leaders. JEAN CHRISTOPHE is not the model for our boys as are Byrd, Lindbergh, and Roosevelt. It is not necessary that the heroes given the boys be warriors or men of great physical strength; many times the man of weak stature has a will which wins over obstacles and leads others, as Stevenson and Steinmetz. Could any boy have a nobler example than Walter Reed, the fine young doctor who gave his life that the yellow fever mosquito might be discovered and exterminated? So it seems to me that all boys need biography to give them mental food and to stir their ambition.

John Cowper Powys writes: "All the dangerous worlds of desperate human thought are at everyone's command. Every degree of paganism, pantheism, polytheism, lies open to the youngest." But these attitudes are exterior products of thought, changeable through life as one's reading and experiences vary them. The subconscious thoughts which accompany the conscious ones are often provocative, not quite understood ideas. The evil of an unfinished, not quite understood thought or a completely misunderstood one, may pursue a person through the entire course of life. How can an adolescent understand the thought processes and emotions, for instance, of *SISTER CARRIE* or the frenzied ravings of Raskolnikoff and his commission of murder, inevitable and artistic though the treatment may be? In this lies the danger of such a list as Mr. Robbins has compiled.

As a contrast to this list, some of the books boys are constantly borrowing from the public libraries are added. Some of them may not be outstanding as literature,

but they are outstanding in the ideals they uphold and in the characters they portray. All books for children should be well written, but the chief value of any book for young people is the subject matter—simple, direct stories of natural human people who are objective in their outlooks and desires. Youth must have his thoughts turned outward, not inward. With the foundation of character laid, the standards of honor formed, then let him cope as need or desire dictates with the inward processes of thought and emotion. To give to a growing boy the book fare suggested would be to confound him because he could not understand; would leave him with questions he could not answer; would even lead into that abyss of questionings of the values of life which now comes to the average person a decade earlier than a few generations ago, and at least half a decade too soon.

If it is true that a man is known by the company he keeps, it is even more true in regard to the books he reads. The aim of libraries is to give to all boys the finest characters of literature and history and to show them the fine and noble rather than the too complex and sordid. Isaac Disraeli writes that great books lead us to a proper perspective and sense of the values of life. "He who is not familiarized with the finest passages of the finest writers will one day be mortified to observe that his best thoughts are their indifferent ones."

#### MR. ROBBINS' LIST

Whitlock, Brand—TURN OF THE BALANCE  
 Bruce, H. Addington—THE RIDDLE OF  
 PERSONALITY  
 Zola, Emile—LABOR  
 Zangwill, Israel—CHILDREN OF THE  
 GHETTO  
 Sinclair, Upton—THE JUNGLE  
 London, Jack—PEOPLE OF THE ABYSS  
 Churchill, Winston—INSIDE OF THE CUP  
 Berkman, Alexander—PRISON MEMORIES  
 OF AN ANARCHIST

Stewart, Charles D.—FUGITIVE BLACK-SMITH

Wells, H. G.—WAR OF THE WORLDS

Dreiser, Theodore—SISTER CARRIE

Thackeray, W. M.—ADVENTURES OF BARRY LYNDON

Blasco-Ibanez, V.—FRUIT OF THE VINE

Tolstoy, Leo—RESURRECTION

Booth, Ernest—STEALING THROUGH LIFE

Untermeyer, Louis—CHALLENGE

Renan, Ernest—LIFE OF JESUS

Hauptmann, Gerhart—WEAVERS

Rolland, Romain—JEAN CHRISTOPHE

Morris, William—NEWS FROM NOWHERE

Poole, Ernest—HARBOR

Twain, Mark—CONNECTICUT YANKEE

Dostoevsky, Feodor—CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

Dickens, Charles—HARD TIMES

Dumas, Alexandre—TWENTY YEARS AFTER

Gogol, N. V.—DEAD SOULS

Hawthorne, Nathaniel—SCARLET LETTER

Reade, Charles—CLOISTER AND THE HEARTH

Barjoo, Pio—QUEST

Hugo, Victor—TOILERS OF THE SEA

Austen, Jane—PRIDE AND PREJUDICE

Balzac, Honore de—OLD GORIOT

Lewis, Sinclair—MAIN STREET

Hill, Grace Livingston—PRODIGAL GIRL

Minot, John Claire—BEST ANIMAL STORIES I KNOW

### THE LIBRARY LIST

Auslander, Joseph A. and Hill, F. E.—WINGED HORSE

Beebe, William—ARCTURUS ADVENTURE

Byrd, Richard—SKYWARD

Bulfinch, Thomas—AGE OF CHIVALRY

Bok, Edward—THE AMERICANIZATION OF EDWARD BOK

Ellsberg, Edward—ON THE BOTTOM

Firdusi—EPIC OF KINGS

Irving, Washington — KNICKERBOCKER'S HISTORY OF NEW YORK

Kempton, K. P.—BOYS' TRADER HORN

Lindbergh, Charles A.—"WE."

Mukerji, D. J.—GHOND THE HUNTER

Nordhoff, Charles and Hall, C. N.—FALCONS OF FRANCE

Partridge, Bellamy—AMUNDSEN

Pupin, Michael—FROM IMMIGRANT TO INVENTOR

Sandburg, Carl—ABE LINCOLN GROWS UP

Thomas, Lowell—WITH LAWRENCE IN ARABIA

Van Loon, H. W.—STORY OF MANKIND

Verne, Jules—20,000 LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA

Wadsworth, Wallace—PAUL BUNYAN AND HIS GREAT BLUE OX

Roosevelt, Theodore — STORIES OF THE GREAT WEST

DuChaillu, P. B.—COUNTRY OF THE DWARFS

Dumas, Alexander—THREE MUSKETEERS



### BUSINESS LETTERS

(Continued from page 171)

As books came from the local dealers, letters were written by members of the committee enclosing the amount due on the orders. All was done according to the best business practice, and was certainly of great interest and benefit to the children. Joy unbounded was exhibited by those who had written for books, when packages, addressed to them, began to come in. For the

remaining seven months of that school year, those forty-five volumes were the ones in which they had a special pride because they had been selected and ordered by the pupils themselves.

Needs for many other business letters developed during the year, but none gave the real pleasure that those orders for books created.



# Opportunities in Elementary English\*

WALTER BARNES

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NO ONE can deny the pressing necessity for a widespread and sustained interest in elementary English. It is probably not an over-statement, that the problem of elementary English, including as it does both the language-composition group and the literature-reading group is, next to health, the most important problem of the school. It is highly desirable, therefore, that everyone concerned with school education pay direct and continued attention to elementary English.

There are two reasons why elementary English is of profound importance. One is that, even yet, large numbers of our children leave our schools at the end or before the end of the elementary school period. If the English work in this division of the school is not adequate and effective, these children are handicapped for life. This is so obvious as not to need detailed argument. The other reason is that successful work in English in the high schools and colleges depends upon the effective work in English in the elementary division. Let us turn our attention briefly to this phase of the matter.

One of the stock statements made when the question of elementary English as over against high school English comes up is that the elementary schools have not properly prepared the boys and girls for entrance into high school. In general, the criticism is that the children are not well prepared in the mechanics of English, whether it be in language or in reading. There seems to be a general feeling that the elementary school should look after the

so-called "elements," and a general disposition to look upon the elementary school as preparatory to the high school. With such a position a good many of us have little patience.

The reason that the English work in the elementary grades is important for the future lives of these boys and girls in high school, is that language is a *continuum*. Children and young people engage, for very good and strong reasons, in various language and reading activities. These undoubtedly shift somewhat as the boys and girls mature, but the shift is only relative and somewhat insignificant. When children of either the elementary or high school area are urged by the social pressures of their lives to engage in English activities, the function of the school is to help them engage more effectively. The problem of mechanics is quite as much a problem for the high school as for the elementary school. We shall never, I think, solve our problem until and unless we realize that the problem is a continuous one throughout the years of the children's schooling.

The reason that all of us must turn our attention to elementary school English is that the English activities are primarily questions of habits, behavior patterns, modes of conduct. If these are not given wise and thorough emphasis during the elementary school period, then the graduates of the elementary schools are gravely handicapped.

Undoubtedly, all of us with either a general or a special interest in the successful teaching of English in the schools must

\*Paper read before the Elementary Division of The National Council of Teachers of English, Columbus, Ohio, June 30, 1930.

turn our attention to and keep our attention focused upon the varied and intricate problems of elementary English.

Anyone who attempts to state (to say nothing of attempting to solve) the problems of English in the elementary schools, will discover that the problems are being approached and attacked from a number of different angles. Educational philosophers, sociologists, psychologists, the measurement experts, administrators, classroom teachers, special supervisors and specialists in English, as well as librarians and the public-in general—all of these are offering suggestions. Many of these suggestions are decidedly helpful and contributive. Think, for example, of what the educational sociologist, with his researches into the behavior patterns in language and reading, is contributing. Or look into the newer aspects of psychology, whether it is the behavioristic concept or the *gestalt*. Here are implications of tremendous significance, both in the language and in the literature fields.

What seems to be needed above everything else at present is some kind of unification and centralization of all the forces working for the improvement of English during the period of childhood. There should be some authoritative group continually scanning the different fields of human thought and scientific research, bringing together the widely scattered ideas, and interpreting them to those most directly concerned.

It is from this angle that the work of the Elementary Division of the English Council holds out such promise. With the *Elementary English Review* as a clearing house, as a central coordinating agency, the public in general and educationists in particular may be kept informed and inspired month after month. Moreover, the constructive program of the Elementary Division and *The Review* has in it tremendous possibilities for good. A three-fold program has been adopted. The first enter-

prise is the compilation of a recreational reading list for elementary school children. The second is the formulation of criteria for the organization of professionalized courses in the elementary English curriculum of teacher-training institutions. The third is the making of a course of study in elementary school English based upon children's interests—and, if I may add a word, children's *activities*. If these three projects can be carried through to successful completion, all students of the subject will have available material of incalculable worth. And if such enterprises can be formulated and carried through one after the other, the vexatious and important problems of elementary English will be on the way to solution.

It follows, I think, that all of us and especially those of us who are most closely and deeply concerned with the teaching of English in the schools, have certain obligations. We must recognize that the average classroom teacher cannot be herself a specialist in elementary English. She should and probably does recognize the transcendent importance of English throughout her work. But she herself must be just as expert in the teaching of other subjects. It follows, therefore, that the Elementary Division of the National Council of the Teachers of English must recruit its forces from other groups as well as from classroom teachers. Particularly should we endeavor to solicit the co-operation of school superintendents, elementary school principals, supervisors of elementary English and instructors in schools of education and teachers colleges responsible for the training of teachers of elementary school English. If we can band together the persons in these positions throughout the United States, we shall have a group large and influential enough to make the Elementary Division of the English Council a tremendous force in the solving of our joint problems.

## Editorials

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### ***The Council Meets in Cleveland***

CLEVELAND will welcome you to the 1930 meeting of the National Council of Teachers of English, November 27, 28, and 29.

You have always meant to experience the inspiration of the meeting of the National Council. Now is the time. The exhibit alone, national in scope, will repay you for the trip. You will be stimulated by the real fun of the social program. You will gain a sense of comradeship with your fellow workers. You will meet many of the inspired teachers you have heard about. You will pick up invaluable new ideas that will keep you one of the leaders in your field.

The curriculum will be the general theme of the convention which is for all teachers of English. Section meetings will consider English in the elementary school, in the junior and senior high schools, and in the college. There will be conferences on topics of importance to English teachers, among them, teacher training. Miss Laura Edwards, of Glenville High School, Cleveland, is arranging an exhibit of creative work by students.

The meeting will begin Thanksgiving eve-

ning. There will be a luncheon of the Elementary Division on Friday noon. At the banquet on Friday evening, speakers of national reputation will talk. Drives, a tea, a theatre party, and visits to private schools are being planned for the entertainment of visitors. Refer to the program on page 184 for further details.

The Council, which was founded nineteen years ago, has been powerful in uniting teachers of English in all parts of the country. It has some 6,000 members. It sponsors *The Elementary English Review*, its official organ for elementary school English. Ruth Mary Weeks, of Paseo High School, Kansas City, Mo., is president of the Council for this year.

Cleveland expects 1,000 teachers at the meeting. Seven hundred attended the meeting in Kansas City last year. Reduced railroad rates are available when 150 tickets are validated. You are urged to make reservations at headquarters—the Statler Hotel.

Your presence will help to make this one of the most successful meetings ever held.

*Clara C. Ewalt,  
Cleveland, Ohio*

## Reviews and Abstracts

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**SPICE AND THE DEVIL'S CAVE.** By Agnes Danforth Hewes. Decorated by Lynd Ward. Alfred A. Knopf, 1930.

Although, at first glance, the title seems rather more appropriate to the Sunday supplement of a newspaper than to a children's book, it fits the story, innocently enough. "The Devil's Cave" was the name given by Arab seamen to the Cape of Good Hope, and spice is not, in this instance, metaphorical, for cloves and pepper and nutmeg were almost as valuable to traders of the Sixteenth Century as gold and precious stones.

The story concerns Vasco Da Gama's voyage around the Cape of Good Hope for the purpose of establishing a trade route to the spice markets of the East. Magellan and Diaz also appear in the narrative. The story has a unique value, however, in its disclosure of the great part played by the Spanish and Portuguese Jews in the voyages and discoveries of this period. Abel Zakuto, Jewish banker, map-maker, and inventor of navigation instruments, is the outstanding figure in the narrative.

It seems rather a pity that the author tries to quicken the past by putting current slang into the mouths of her sixteenth century characters. Most authors of historical fiction strive to take their readers back into the past, imaginatively; rarely do they attempt, to modernize antiquity, knowing that they would only succeed in destroying the illusion they wish to create.

Although the reviewer cannot agree with Professor Curtis Howe Walker who states, in his introduction to this book, that "Mrs. Hewes has that wizard's touch which makes the past live," he still finds this a good adventure story.

J. M.

**THE FAIRY CARAVAN.** By Beatrix Potter. David McKay, 1929.

Beatrix Potter is of course well known to all who work with children and with books. It is therefore superfluous for a reviewer to extol the charm of her stories.

The Fairy Caravan concerns the adventures of a long-haired guinea-pig with Alexander and William's Circus, which was manned and man-

aged by animals. Besides Alexander, who is a dog, and William, a pony, there are, in the circus caravan, Xarifa, the dormouse, Jenny Ferret, Iky Shepster, the starling, Paddy Pig, and of course the timid guinea-pig, Tupenny.

It will be a dull child indeed who does not read with delight of the rescue of Paddy Pig from the fairies in Pringle Wood, while the lament of the animals in the fairy smithy over the passing of horses, and the tale of the dancing horse-shoes should stir the imaginations of children who have never known anything but motor transportation.

Miss Potter is poetic in her sensitiveness to word-music and she has retained, in this book, many north-country idioms which, while they may offer some difficulty to child readers, yet add a good deal to the story in atmosphere and poetic charm. The book is full of fairy lore and a delicate sense of humor is evident throughout.

D. B.

**JUDY IN CONSTANTINOPLE.** By Judy Acheson. Illustrated by Anne Merriman Peck. Frederick A. Stokes, 1930. \$1.75

During the past two or three years a number of boys, notably David Putnam and Deric Nusbäum, have successfully recorded their experiences in strange places. Now, in *JUDY IN CONSTANTINOPLE*, a girl gives a vivid and humorous account of three years in the Near East.

Judy Acheson, the twelve-year-old author, is evidently a keen observer. She writes in a rambling, ingenuous, and humorous style that makes her book good reading.

"At the sea-food stalls the way they sell and you buy has always interested me," writes Judy, and proceeds to relate an incident that shows a thorough and entertaining comprehension of practical psychology. Accounts of the colorful bazaars of old Stamboul, the Turkish fire department, the "commission shops," and her voyage in the Black Sea make one regret that school geographies devote their pages to dead facts instead of to such living details as Judy gives here.

D. B.



## Among the Publishers

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- Albert, Edna. *LITTLE PILGRIM TO PENN'S WOODS*. Illustrated by Esther Brann. Longmans, Green, 1930. \$2.00
- Berger, Helen. *MYSTERY OF WORLD'S END*. Illustrated by Carlos Sanchez M. Longmans, Green, 1930. \$2.00
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- Fyleman, Rose. *GAY GO UP*. Illustrated by Decie Merwin. Doubleday, Doran, 1930. \$1.50
- Gimmage, Peter. *THE PICTURE BOOK OF SHIPS*. Pictured by Helen Craig. Macmillan, 1930. \$2.00
- Gordon, Margery, and King, Marie B. *A MAGIC WORLD*. An anthology of poetry with lessons in poetry. D. Appleton, 1930
- Hader, Berta, and Hader, Elmer. *LIONS AND TIGERS AND ELEPHANTS TOO*. Being an account of Polly Patchin's trip to the zoo. (Illustrated by the authors.) Longmans, Green, 1930, \$1.25
- Law, Frederick Houk, Ed. *SCIENCE IN LITERATURE*. A collection of literary scientific essays. Harper and Brothers, 1929
- Palm, Amy. *WANDA AND GRETA AT BROBY FARM*. Translated from the Swedish by Siri Andrews. Illustrated by Frank McIntosh. Longmans, Green, 1930. \$2.00
- Quinn, Vernon. *THE MARCH OF IRON MEN*. A tale of the Crusades. Illustrated. Frederick A. Stokes, 1930. \$2.00
- Slade, Gurney. *IN LAWRENCE'S BODYGUARD*. Illustrated by William Siegel. Frederick A. Stokes, 1930. \$2.00
- Vaughan, Agnes Carr. *LUCIAN GOES A-VOYAGING*. Illustrated by Harrie Wood. Alfred A. Knopf, 1930. \$2.00
- Williams, Blanche Colton, Ed. *NEW NARRATIVES*. D. Appleton, 1930
- Williams-Ellis, Amabel. *MEN WHO FOUND OUT*. Stories of great scientific discoveries. Coward-McCann, 1930. \$2.00

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## THE DRILL CONTENT OF CERTAIN LANGUAGE TESTS

*(Continued from page 169)*

on the individual drill content and the overlap of test and practice exercises in elementary language reveal the fact that not only is there no agreement among language-test makers and authors of language drill exercises as to the specific skills or items to be included in each type of material, but there is little or no significant overlap between the two types of material. This is serious, for it means, among other things, that the makers of language tests are busy making tests which analyze and reveal one group of language skills, while

the makers of drill exercises purporting to have parallel purposes, are depending upon largely unrelated and dissimilar materials to produce the results. As long as this is the case there is not much reason to expect that the language teacher or supervisor who normally would depend upon analytical tests and corrective or drill exercises to improve her instruction will profit much from their use in the classroom. Obviously, much more research is needed to bring about a closer coordination of test and drill materials in elementary language.

THE ELEMENTARY ENGLISH REVIEW

National Council of Teachers of English

ANNUAL MEETING

Cleveland, Ohio, November 27-29, 1930

Headquarters—Hotel Statler

TENTATIVE PARTIAL PROGRAM

Thursday, November 27

2:00 p. m.—*Directors' Meeting*

Reports of committees, including Elementary Committee, Frances Dearborn, Chairman

8:00 p. m.—*Opening Session*

Topic: *The Appreciation of Literature*

Friday, November 28

8:30 a. m.—*Meetings of Research Committees,*

Including Home Reading Committee, Eloise Ramsey in charge of elementary report; and Committee on Examinations, C. C. Certain, Chairman

9:30 a. m.—*General Session*

Topic: *Thinking in Wholes as to the Aim, Scope, Form and Content of the Curriculum*

Welcome—Clarence Stratton, Language Supervisor, Cleveland Public Schools

Educating the Whole Child—Ruth Mary Weeks, Paseo High School, Kansas City, Mo.

Planning for the Whole School Period—Harry C. Morrison, University of Chicago

Showing the Child the Whole Problem by Unit Assignment—Lucy Wilson, South

Philadelphia High School for Girls, Philadelphia

Untangling the Elements—Walter Hinchman, Milton Academy, Milton, Mass.

Noon—*Luncheon, Elementary Committee*

Topic: *Recreational Reading in the Grades*

Eloise Ramsey, Detroit Teachers College

May Puhek, McKerrow School, Detroit

May Hill, Western Reserve University, Cleveland

Velda Barnesberger, Assistant Superintendent, Toledo

Frances Dearborn presiding

2:00 p. m.—*Conferences on Curricular Problems*

Conference on Oral English—Walter Barnes, Chairman

Conference on Written Composition—Essie Chamberlain, Chairman

Conference on Reading—Dudley Miles, Chairman

Conference on Grammar—Henry Owens, Chairman

and others

Evening—*Banquet*

Topic: *Russia, the Land of Educational Romance*

Toastmaster, Rollo Lyman, University of Chicago

Mass Education in Reading—Anna Louise Strong, Moscow, Russia

The Educational Theatre in Russia—Hallie Flanagan, Vassar College

Entertainment after the banquet: The Helen Haiman Joseph Puppets

Saturday, November 29

9:00 a. m.—*Elementary Section Meeting*

Frances Dearborn, Chairman

Basing the Course of Study in English Upon Children's Interests—Ernest Horn, University of Iowa

Recent Data on Children's Interest in Poetry—Helen Mackintosh, Grand Rapids Public Schools

Symposium of Worth While Practices for Arousing and Discovering Children's Interests in English: Five minute talks by grade school teachers:

Cora Addicott, Cleveland

Margaret Crossley, Erie

Ann Gaunt, Pittsburgh

Neva German, Youngstown

Wilma Hutchison, Cincinnati

The Correct Evaluation of Children's Interests—Florence Bamberger, Johns Hopkins

A Nation-Wide View of the English Curriculum—Bess Goodykoontz, Assistant Commissioner of Education, Washington, D. C.

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